

Holy Every Day

October 2, 2016

The Third Commandment

One Sunday morning, a mother woke her son and told him to get ready for church. He replied, "I'm not going."

"Why not?" she asked. "I'll give you three good reasons," he said. "One, I'm tired and I want to sleep in. Two, they're mean to me. And three, I don't like them."

His mother replied, "I'll give YOU three good reasons why you ARE going. One, I'm making the bed with you in it or not. Two, you're 54 years old. And three, you're the pastor!"

Of course, that story is completely fictional...

As we prepare for the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation, we are reading Luther's *Small Catechism* together. If you look at the screens, you will see a summary of our discussion so far.ⁱ

Today we study third commandment: "*Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy.*" "Now we've got you, Pastor!" you say to yourselves. "All that happy talk about God's goodness and promises! Finally we get a real commandment! Go to church. Go home. Don't have any fun. I knew it was too good to be true!"

In his Large Catechism Martin Luther says Sabbath-keeping doesn't apply to Christians. You heard that right. He wrote, "according to its literal, outward sense, this commandment does not concern us Christians."ⁱⁱ So, why do we still observe such a day? Luther has two answers.

First, hardworking people need a rest. "Nature teaches and demands," Luther writes, "that the common people...who have attended to their work and trades the whole week long—should retire for a day to rest and be refreshed."

Second, people need time to participate in public worship—"to hear and discuss God's Word and then praise God with song and prayer."

So, what does it mean to keep the day "holy"? It's not doing nothing. It's not dressing up in our best clothes. It's not singing the right songs or coming to the right place or feeling the right way.

God's Word makes the day holy. "At whatever time God's Word is taught, preached, heard, read, or pondered," Luther writes in the Large Catechism, "there the person, the day, and the work are sanctified by it, not on account of the external work but on account of the Word which makes us all saints."ⁱⁱⁱ

Did you get that? **God's Word makes the day holy.** That's today's main point. **God's Word makes the day holy.**

We don't make one day holy. Instead, we make every day holy when we root that day in God's Word. We gather for worship on Sunday to put ourselves in a place where God's Word can work on us. So the "shall not" part of the commandment is very direct. "*We are to fear and love God,*

so that we do not despise preaching or God's word... ” There is no substitute for weekly worship attendance.

The “shall” part of the meaning is equally direct. *“We are to fear and love God [so that we] instead keep that word holy and gladly hear and learn it.”*

God's Word makes the day holy.

How does this happen? Remember the previous commandments. We belong to God and that's the good news. We are not on our own. So we can trust God in every time of need. We use God's holy name in prayer, praise and thanksgiving as we worship.

God's Word creates trust in God by the power of the Holy Spirit. That trust frees us from anxiety and equips us to keep the day holy in our hearts, our heads and our hands.

In our gospel reading, the apostles cry out, *“Increase our faith!”* Jesus has declared that they must always forgive a church member who has wronged them. Faced with this impossible task, they shout in despair—and with good reason! We can't muster up **any** faith on our own. Only the Holy Spirit can create in us the faith to do what we ought. When that happens we don't get extra credit. Instead, we are grateful that the Spirit chooses to make us holy in our daily work.

God's Word makes the day holy.

God claims *every* day as holy and a time for worship. We Lutherans have “house churches.” We call them families. Families are called to *daily* worship and praise. Martin Luther told his congregation in Wittenberg, “Every father of a family is a bishop in his house and the wife a bishopess. Therefore remember that you in your homes are to help us carry on the ministry we do in the church.”^{iv}

We see that in our second lesson. Paul reminds Timothy that his faith has come to him through the work of his grandmother and mother. The Holy Spirit can certainly work without us parents and grandparents. But it works better when we cooperate!

So pray before you eat. Have daily devotions in the morning, at night, or both. We have daily worship right after breakfast at our house. That worship makes the day holy! We worship as a community at least once a week. We can worship as house churches every day. If you want resources for that practice in your home, just see me.

God's Word makes the day holy. God wants to give you the faith that fills life with purpose, hope and joy every day. Let's pray...

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ⁱ The Introduction: “I am the LORD, your God.” The good news is that we belong to God. The First Commandment: “You shall have no other gods.” We don't have to be on our own. The Second Commandment: “You shall not make wrongful use of the Lord's name.” God gives us God's true name so we can call upon God in prayer, praise and thanksgiving.

ⁱⁱ Book of Concord, Large Catechism, paragraph 82.

ⁱⁱⁱ Book of Concord, Large Catechism, paragraph 92.

^{iv} In a sermon contained in Luther's Works, volume 51.